

# PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**23 NOVEMBER 2023**

**PRESENT:** Councillor K. Davies (Vice Chair in the Chair)

**Councillors (In Person):**

T.A.J. Davies                      N. Lewis                      B.D.J. Phillips                      G.B. Thomas  
S. Godfrey-Coles

**Councillors (Virtually):**

S.M. Allen                      D.C. Evans                      T.M. Higgins

**Also in attendance:**

- Councillor A. Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy;
- Councillor E. Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services;

**Also Present (In Person):**

D.W. John, Head of Environmental Infrastructure;  
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager;  
J. Edwards, Business Improvement Manager;  
A. Evans, Assistant Solicitor;  
R. S. Waters, Highways and Transportation Services Manager;  
C. Nelson, Highways Asset Manager;  
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;  
D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer;  
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

**Also Present (Virtually):**

K. Harrop, Community Safety Manager;  
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer.

**Chamber. County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP and remotely: 10:00am - 11:20am**

- [Note: The Chair having received and accepted a request from Councillor Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy informed the Committee that the order of business would be changed to enable agenda item 7 to be considered prior to Agenda Item 4. However, for ease of referencing, these minutes reflect the order of business itemised on the agenda for the meeting.]

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Cooper and K. Madge.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Minute Item(s)</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
T.A.J. Davies & G.B. Thomas	5. Highway Asset Management Plan – Maintenance Manual Part 4.8 – Highways Adverse Weather & Winter Service Plan	Cllr is a landowner responsible of land that is adjacent to roadside culverts.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)**

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

**4. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN - ANNUAL STATEMENT REPORT 2023**

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Report 2023, presented by Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services. The Cabinet Member highlighted the significant challenges that was being faced by the Authority.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- In noting that the County of Carmarthenshire had the second largest highway network in Wales and its roads carry the third highest levels of traffic, strong concerns were raised in observing that this report, similar to previous years illustrated a continuous decline in the road conditions within Carmarthenshire. It was recognised that only way to improve the current conditions of the roads would be to receive adequate level of funding from the Government.

Further concerns were extended to the continuing budget pressures having an impact on the conditions of the roads as a result of climate change as an evident cause and the increase in material, construction and surfacing costs, as well as the increased cost of the winter service operations. It was acknowledged that without the necessary funds the critical asset would be subject to continual deterioration.

Reference was made to page 16 of the report which cited that ‘in common with other highway Authorities, Carmarthenshire has a significant backlog, estimated in Carmarthenshire at over £63m of highway surface maintenance, which is growing for year on year.’ This caused significant concern in amongst members of the Committee who referenced the ‘standstill’ investment required £8m compared to the expected capital funding in 2024/25 of £0.6m per year, which would not be sustainable.

Furthermore, as signified on page 16 of the report, observations were made in that there was an increase in public dis-satisfaction of the condition of the highways and that the customer service requests were growing which placed a higher demand on resources in reaction to the issues. It was commented that this reactionary method was not cost effective or sustainable.

Committee Members acknowledged that the deterioration of the roads was as a result of a funding crisis. It was also noted that it would take circa 12 years to bring the conditions of the bridges up to a satisfactory level.

Reference was made to page 18 of the report – Footways and Cycleways. And the statement ‘There is no capital funding available for 2023/24’. It was commented that footways were also in a state of disrepair and with no capital funding for the next year strong concern was expressed that this could cause injury to users.

The Highways and Transportation Services Manager acknowledged and was sympathetic to all the concerns and matters raised by members and re-iterated the budget pressures and challenges that the department faced. In acknowledging the deterioration in the asset and the consequential maintenance backlog, members were informed that the department faced an increasing volume of reactive maintenance which was placing a significant impact on highways teams diverting them from other essential planned maintenance works. In essence the department was under significant budgetary constraints.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to undertake a PR exercise in order to explain the situation to the public.

Committee Members were appreciative of the honest report. In expressing frustrations with regard to the current budget situation it was proposed that the Committee send a letter to the Welsh Government Minister outlining the current situation and conveying the budget concerns of the Committee. This was duly seconded.

#### **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:**

**4.1 that the Highway Asset Management Plan – Annual Statement report 2023 be received;**

**4.2 that a letter be sent to the Welsh Government Minister outlining the current concerns in relation to the situation of the highway network, conveying the budget concerns as raised by the Committee.**

## 5. **HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN - MAINTENANCE MANUAL PART 4.8 - HIGHWAYS ADVERSE WEATHER & WINTER SERVICE PLAN**

[Note: During the consideration of this item, Councillors A.D.T. Davies and G.B. Thomas declared a personal interest. Both Councillors remained in the meeting, took part in the considerations of the item but did not vote.]

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Maintenance Manual in support of the Highway Asset Management Plan presented by Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services. The report asked that the Committee consider and comment on the part 4.8 – Highways Adverse Weather and Winter Service Plan attached to the report prior to adoption by the Cabinet.

The following comments/queries were raised on the report:-

- In response to a query raised regarding the responsibility of landowners to clear roadside ditches, the Highways and Transportation Services Manager explained that there was not a blanket approach in enforcing landowners to clear roadside ditches, but the local highway teams liaise with landowners to resolve issues locally and avoid any potential enforcement route where possible.

Leaflets had been developed in conjunction with the NFU Cymru, Farmers Union of Wales and in consultation with Countryside Landowners Association to explain the responsibilities of landowners who own land adjacent to the public highway. The leaflet had been promoted to through the Town and Community Council Forum and disseminated to all Town and Community Councils. The leaflet is also available on the Council's website.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the Highway Asset Management Plan – Maintenance Manual Part 4.8 – Highways Adverse Weather and Winter Service Plan be endorsed.**

## 6. **DRAFT LOCAL TOILET STRATEGY**

The Committee considered the Draft Local Toilet Strategy. Presented by Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services it was highlighted that Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017: Provision of Toilets came into force on 31 May 2018 and placed a duty on each Local Authority in Wales to prepare and publish a Local Toilet Strategy for its area.

Furthermore, the Committee was informed that that whilst there was no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to provide public toilets, the duty to prepare a Strategy did not in itself require Local Authorities to provide and maintain public toilets themselves. Local Authorities were however required to take a strategic view on how these facilities could be provided and accessed by the local population. In doing so it is envisaged that local authorities would consider a full range of options for making facilities available to the public.

The following comments/queries were raised on the report:-

- In acknowledging the draft report, it was suggested that in prior to the completion of the final report that Officers explore the possibility of accessing funding through the Brilliant Basic Fund. It was commented that other Authorities have utilised this fund for public facilities. The Business Improvement Manager stated that all possible funding streams would be considered and that suggestions of funding opportunities were welcome.
- It was commented that whilst providing public conveniences was not a statutory duty of the council, it must be acknowledged that it was a basic human need and that particularly the elderly for example may not visit an area that does not have an available public convenience which would in turn impact the economy. In addition, it was recognised that some Town and Community Councils have a public convenience within their jurisdiction however, it was commented that the revenue costs were a drain on their budgets particularly where repeated vandalism was a problem. It was asked, how else would toilet facilities be provided? Taking all what had been raised on board, the Business Improvement Manager agreed that further considerations and exploration was necessary to support the provision of toilet facilities for the Carmarthenshire.
- It was raised that it was important to include considerations into ensuring that adequate toilet facilities were available in out-of-town shopping areas. A solution could be achieved by supporting local businesses in providing a public toilet facility. This would be beneficial for the business and the customer. The Business Improvement Manager concurred with the comments and suggestions and stated that it would be beneficial in supporting local businesses to support the needs of community.
- A Member of the Committee explained that he had been in discussions with a representative of the West Wales Prostate Cancer Support Group regarding the Boys need Bins campaign. The campaign worked to raise awareness about male incontinence and the need for bins in male toilets. In response to an offer made by the support group who would provide the bins for a minimal cost, it was asked if the Council could support this initiative by placing the bins for male continence products in male toilets within Council run facilities including leisure centres, libraries, museums and theatres. The Business Improvement Manager in acknowledging the importance of the Campaign stated that she would be happy to discuss the matter further seeking the necessary details.
- In response to a concern regarding the potential charge increases to access toilets, the Business Improvement Manager stated that whilst she was not able to promise that the charges would not be increased in the future, it would be the last resort, after all other avenues had been exhausted.

- A further suggestion was provided to officers to minimise the maintenance and cleaning costs of toilets in Carmarthenshire would be to link up with colleges who carry out City and Guilds qualifications encouraging young people to get involved and develop business plans enabling them to manage the facility. The Business Improvement Manager thanked for the suggestion and would consider going forward.
- It was suggested that the planning phase of electric car charging stations would be an opportunity to consider the provision of toilets. In acknowledging the significant increase in car charging facilities being placed in towns and rural villages where the occupants of the vehicle may have to wait a period of time prior to a sufficient charge is obtained, it was felt that planning department should consider the opportunity to place a toilet close to areas where more than 5 charging points are established.
- In response to a query regarding the final report, the Business Improvement Manager stated that a final report would be ready for consideration in April 2024 this would provide sufficient time to engage with businesses and seek further funding streams taking on board the suggestions raised by Members.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the draft local toilet Strategy be endorsed subject to the consideration of the Committee's comments and suggestions raised particularly:-**

- **To pilot the Boys need Bins Campaign**
- **That the Planning department consider placing toilet provisions alongside car charging areas of 5 or more points.**

## **7. INTRODUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) - LLANELLI TOWN CENTRE**

The Committee received a report on the Introduction of Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Llanelli Town Centre. The report, presented by the Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy sought the committee to review and assess the information contained in the report relating to the making of a new PSPO for Llanelli Town Centre.

Members noted that in 2020, Carmarthenshire County Council made a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) under section 59 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to address the alcohol-related nuisance and disorder in parts of Llanelli Town Centre. The Order came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 and expired on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

The report stated that Carmarthenshire County Council believes that the PSPO had been effective in reducing alcohol-related anti-social behaviour. However, the anti-social consumption of alcohol, controlled drugs and psychoactive substances in Llanelli Town Centre has had, and was likely to continue to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of people within the locality. There were ongoing concerns amongst the community and the police regarding this issue, and in addition, drug-related concerns have been raised.

These concerns are supported by crime and disorder data and evidence the need for a new PSPO to be implemented to give identified officers additional powers to deal with these issues.

The Committee after consideration of the report were happy with the content of the report and therefore had no comments or queries to raise. Committee members were in support of the introduction of the PSPO in Llanelli for the reasons stated in the report.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the Introduction of Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) – Llanelli Town Centre be approved.**

## **8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled to take place on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2023 and was afforded the opportunity to request for any specific information that Members may wish to include within the reports.

In response to a request to delay the Electric Fleet report, the Chair informed the Committee of the reason and suggested that the report be considered by the Committee in March 2024. This would allow the Climate and Nature Emergency Panel to undertake a piece of work to review the scope to implement ultra-low emission vehicles across the Council services, which would include electric vehicles as part of the fleet in future.

In addition, the Chair stated that as the Committee did not return any observations, comments or queries in relation to the Shoreline Management Plan 2 report that was circulated for scrutiny by e-mail on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023, it was requested that report be circulated for scrutiny by e-mail once again seeking member comments.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the Committee meeting to be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be agreed with exception of the Electric Fleet report which would be moved to March 2024.**

## **9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 3RD OCTOBER 2023**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2023 be signed as a correct record.**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**